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DEPARTMENT FOR ELAINE SAMSON, EUR/WE; DAVID QUINN, PM/RSAT;  
LOURDES CUE, WHA/AND; JACK HILLMEYER, EUR/RPM  
USNATO FOR AMBASSADOR NULAND, DCM OLSON, AND JOHN COCKRELL  
KABUL FOR DON SHEEHAN AND BRENT HARTLEY  
OSD FOR RACHEL ELLEHUUS, NICHOLAS HILLMAN  
JOINT STAFF FOR VINCE FREEMAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: DCM COMPARES NOTES WITH MOD SEC-GEN LUIS  
CUESTA

REF: A. MADRID 1910

[1](#)B. KABUL 3437

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Deputy Chief of Mission and Spanish Ministry of Defense Secretary General for Policy Luis Cuesta reviewed the past year in U.S.-Spanish cooperation and addressed ongoing issues at their December 19 meeting. Saying it helped to have helpful counterparts, Cuesta agreed 2007 had been characterized by hard work, mutual respect, and flexibility. The two discussed shared interests in Afghanistan, concerns about Venezuelan support for narco-trafficking, continuing commitment to Kosovo, and the status of Spanish requests for Tomahawk weapons and aircraft security systems. The DCM also used the opportunity to follow up on issues such as equitable compensation for U.S.-indirect-hire MOD employees at NAVSTA Rota, which Cuesta had raised during his November 30 meeting with DASD Dan Fata. The meeting has already yielded subsequent conversations and some progress on the Spanish offer to train and Afghan Army company (reftels). This message also contains a LAIRCM-related action request at para 7. End summary.

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Afghanistan: Fill a Need, or Miss an Opportunity?  
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[1](#)2. (C) The DCM thanked Cuesta for Spain's contributions in Afghanistan and emphasized the continuing need, as presented by SecDef Gates in congressional testimony and conveyed by U.S. delegates to the November 29-30 OSCE Ministerial in Madrid, for partners to step up and meet the great challenges in Afghanistan. Noting FM Moratinos had attempted to deflect discussion with Under Secretary Burns of increased participation in Afghanistan, citing the Spanish electoral cycle, the DCM assured Cuesta the U.S. would not delay in revisiting Afghanistan with the GOS after Spain's March 9, 2008, general elections. The DCM likewise assured Cuesta the Spanish offer to train an Afghan company (reftels) was valued.

13. (C) Regarding the training proposal, Cuesta stated the MOD was still awaiting a response from CSTC-A to the draft MOU sent to MG Cone o/a December 5. Cuesta posited Spanish insistence on two "essential elements," a permanent presence in Badghis province and an initial commitment of two years, were likely to be sticking points. Cuesta stressed the initial period was renewable, and spoke almost exclusively in terms of an eventual ANA battalion. When the DCM spoke of the importance of harmonizing our shared mission in Afghanistan and the need for flexibility in case of emergencies outside the Spanish area of responsibility, Cuesta conceded Spain was working the MOU language strategically but would certainly make troops available in case of an extraordinary need. He suggested that as long as a minimum company contingent were resident in the proposed Badghis base, the rest of the battalion could be deployed elsewhere. The Spanish hope was to provide security in the province. Cuesta called it an opportunity to create a 600-man battalion where currently there was none. Cuesta said it would be a "shame" if we could not reach and implement and agreement.

14. (S/NF) COMMENT: Working-level DAO contacts in the ministry confirmed December 20 that Spanish BG Castresana had e-mailed the so-called counter-offer December 5 to CSTC-A's MG Cone, and that Castresana's team had received feedback on the proposal via NATO channels. The MOD appeared to be mulling that feedback even as they awaited direct communication from MG Cone. In fact, Cuesta called the DCM late the morning of December 21 to tell him that he and his military staff had reviewed the NATO-brokered proposal. He said the compromise text on the permanent placement of the company/battalion was acceptable to the Spanish. He also

said that Spain accepted that operational commanders could make the tactical deployment decision to move the company/battalion outside the AOR. Cuesta did say that Spain would insist that any instruction to move the Spanish advisors attached to the company/battalion OMLT be subject to final command authority approval in Madrid. Cuesta expressed the view that Madrid would insist on having final say on the issue of the specific deployment of Spanish advisors, but he was confident that once the request was made, approval would likely be granted. End comment.

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Venezuela  
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15. (C) The DCM raised media reports of increased FARC activity in Venezuela, citing also drug tracks from JIATF-South that he had shared November 23 with Secretary of State for Latin America Trinidad Jimenez. He suggested Spain might be in a position to discuss counter-narcotics concerns with Venezuela, and he asserted the importance of close U.S.-Spanish consultation on Venezuelan counter-narcotics cooperation to avoid surprises. Cuesta acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and the importance of drug seizures, but was careful to note the MOD's involvement was limited to support for the Spanish Civil Guard, except in the case of Venezuelan Armed Forces activity, if any. Regardless, once the drugs arrived in Spain they fell under the purview of the Ministry of Interior. The DCM suggested the time for inter-agency cooperation and coordination was therefore earlier in the track.

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Spanish Acquisition of TLAM and LAIRCM  
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16. (S) Reassuring Cuesta the Embassy had done its part to brief the importance to Spain and U.S. national interest of Tomahawk for this major NATO ally, the DCM advised the State Department's legislative affairs bureau was carefully weighing the tactical question of congressional notification in the context of other pending cases. Cuesta seemed satisfied that the notification might come this week or after

Congress returns in January. Regarding the Government of Spain's request for Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM), submitted November 13 to SAF/IA, the DCM conceded the Pentagon was still considering the wide-ranging Spanish proposal. He suggested that bureaucratically, the request for protection of additional aircraft (i.e. Head of State and Head of Government) did not fit easily and required additional review. The DCM assured Cuesta the U.S. Mission was tracking the request.

17. (S/NF) NOTE: Post has subsequently learned the Spanish Air Attache in Washington may have learned from DOD contacts the LAIRCM request is likely to be denied. Ambassador Aguirre will seek high-level meetings to discuss the status of the Spanish Letter of Request during his January consultations in Washington. In the meantime, Post seeks guidance and cooperation in speaking with one voice to interested Spanish partners in Madrid and in Washington. End note.

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Pay Equity for Rota Workers  
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18. (SBU) Picking up a thread from Cuesta's November 30 conversation with DASD Fata, the DCM affirmed the USG is paying competitive wages to indirect-hire local employees at Naval Station Rota. He noted USG salaries can be anywhere from five to fifty per cent higher than those paid by the Spanish MOD to personnel in similar positions. The rate of increase offered this year to USG employees was not commensurate with what the Spanish MOD offered, primarily

because the GOS implemented retroactive changes to make up for past wages shortfalls. Cuesta did not dispute the competitiveness of U.S. salaries, but he noted the method for determining the pay scale had changed this year. He asked to know why the U.S. had used a "different" system for evaluating compensation, and he asked how wages would be calculated moving forward. In addition to seeking clarification, Cuesta preferred to use the most favorable method for determining compensation levels in the future.

NOTE: ODC notes the methodology used was the same this year as in past years. Post surmises Cuesta's query stems from the fact that the U.S., in calculating this year's increases, had to average the unusually wide range of Spanish salary percentage increases. End note.

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No Change on Kosovo  
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19. (C) Cuesta raised the issue of Kosovo, stating Spain would keep doing what it had been doing. He saw KFOR's mission as protecting minorities and assuring freedom of movement, and noted the GOS would consider discussing additional missions at the appropriate time (once Kosovo's final status was determined). Spain did not see the urgency to include provisions for future Kosovo security forces before the final status determination. The DCM suggested they keep in touch to ensure the process was well handled. He added the United States would be asking Spain to do more on Kosovo and in other difficult areas and noted the price of leadership is the willingness to make tough decisions.

AGUIRRE